

MRS. RANSOM LEWIS, WIDOW OF DECEASED FIREMAN, DENOUNCES DEFAMERS OF MEN WHO STOOD BY HER IN HER TROUBLE

Declares That Mayor Kern, Mr. Karch and Chief Dinges Deserve Unstinted Praise and Not Criticism and Abuse, For Their Conduct In Connection With Her Case — Submits To The News-Democrat, Frank and Truthful Statement For Publication Setting Forth The Facts Exactly As They Are.

On the evening of the third day of last July there occurred a fatal collision between a truck of the Belleville fire department and an Illinois Central passenger train at the intersection of Union avenue and the southern track of the Illinois Central Railroad, in which catastrophe one of the firemen, Ransom Lewis, lost his life.

Certain mischievous persons have put forth strong efforts to furnish food for gossip by basing a scandal on the lawyer's fee which the Probate Court approved and allowed to Attorney Charles A. Karch for handling the claim of Mrs. Lewis, arising from the accident, against the railroad company, and bringing about the adjudication thereof.

Wholly gratuitously and without the shadow of justifiable excuse, the names of Mayor Fred. J. Kern and Fire Chief Frank R. Dinges were dragged into the unsavory controversy. They had no more to do with determining the size of the lawyer's fee than the man in the moon; had not the remotest financial interest in the matter, either directly or indirectly; and received not, nor at any time hoped to receive, the smallest part or parcel of the allowance.

One local newspaper published the story with great gusto and unconcealed joy. The other local newspapers, with the exception of the Post and Zeitung, entirely ignored the stuff. The last-named paper investigated the matter in the Probate Court and found everything regular and Mr. Karch's fee a legal charge, approved and allowed by the court, and so stated in its columns.

The same story was brought to the Advocate office some weeks ago and was unhesitatingly rejected and turned down by the editor on account of its being not news but scandal and gossip, without any practical foundation of fact to bolster it up.

The News-Democrat has no desire to answer the charges and insinuations which were made in the articles which were published. It will let Mrs. Ransom Lewis, the widow of the dead fireman, attend to that. She is the best and most competent witness to testify in this controversy, and her evidence ought to be and is definite

and conclusive. She has filed with the News-Democrat, for publication, the following statement of facts over her own signature, black on white:

"I wish to enter a protest against the way my name has been used in connection with certain newspaper articles which were published in this city last week, unfairly and unjustly attacking Mayor Fred. J. Kern, Fire Chief Frank R. Dinges and Attorney Charles A. Karch. I think that a great wrong has been done to these men by the abuse that has been heaped upon them in connection with the death of my husband, where nothing but praise and credit was due them. I know that my husband was very appreciative and thankful when Mr. Kern appointed him on the fire department of the city, giving him the preference out of a large number of applicants.

"After the accident happened in which my husband was killed Mr. Kern helped me in every way that he could, and he went much further than I had a right to expect. I met the Mayor for the first time at the undertaking establishment of Gundlach & Ganech while the inquest over my husband's remains was in progress. He at once came to the front and interested himself in my behalf. He insisted that my husband should have a decent funeral and guaranteed that all of the expenses would be paid without a cent of cost to me. He kept his promise and did have these expenses paid.

"After the inquest he took me to the house of my friend in his automobile himself. He procured the cemetery lot on which my husband is buried for me without expense to me and saw to it that I got the deed free of cost. He delivered the funeral address at my husband's grave, which I regarded as a great favor and I was very thankful.

"I went to him at his office later to speak to him about my claim against the railroad company. He was very courteous and polite to me, but told me that he was not a lawyer. He told me not to be hasty in signing any documents with the claim agent of the company and recommended that I hire a lawyer to represent my inter-

ests. On my request to recommend some one, he named Mr. Karch as a suitable lawyer to serve me and act for me.

"This was the only and last talk I had with the Mayor regarding my case. I have not spoken to him on any subject since, nor have I met the man since. He treated me right and his conduct was manly and strictly honorable throughout. He deserves praise instead of abuse for what he did. I owe him a debt of gratitude which I can never hope to pay. He was my friend and benefactor.

"The same thing is true concerning Fire Chief Frank R. Dinges. He acted the man with me and treated me on the square. He was a true Christian helper at the burial of my husband and during my bereavement. He took matters in charge and managed them for me. I am very thankful to him and am grateful for his kindness and consideration. After the funeral he brought me a check for \$250 as my benefit in the Illinois Firemen's Association. I did not know that my husband carried this insurance, or even that he was a member of the society. Naturally, the money was very welcome. It aided me over until I received money from the railroad company. Mr. Dinges was always kind to me. He always acted the gentleman and did not hesitate to help wherever he could and wherever an opportunity presented itself. I would be heartless and inhuman if I were not appreciative towards him and if I did not say a good word for him, regardless of what his enemies say or think to the contrary.

"I am satisfied with the settlement which Mr. Karch secured for me with the railroad company. A great many people have told me that the fee which the court allowed him for his services was too large. But I confess that I do not know anything about such matters. I am a woman without experience in lawsuits of any kind and never had any business in court before. Mr. Karch worked hard for me and I should not have listened so much to what other people said. They did not know anything about the rules in such cases or they merely wanted to stir up trouble. I do not believe Mr. Karch guilty or capable of a dishonest act.

"But with my dealings with him Mayor Kern had absolutely nothing to do and was never consulted after the visit I paid him in his office.

"This is the first statement which I make for publication. It is the truth and the whole truth. I make it in justice to the men who befriended me in the dark hour of my deep trouble, without being influenced in the least by fear or the hope of present or future favors or reward of any kind. I do not want to see these men wronged. A terrible outrage has been committed against them already. I cannot sit idly by and let it go at that.

"Nothing but praise belongs to the men who helped me when I could not help myself and when a friend in need was a friend indeed.

"I believe the abuse against these men to have been heaped upon them for a political purpose and with an improper and impure and cowardly motive to hurt them.

"I subscribe myself

"Very respectfully,

"MARY LEWIS."